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THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA: PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FIRM AND LASTING PEACE AND PROGRESS IN FASHIONING A REGION OF PEACE, FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 20 August 1996 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the joint statement by the Peace Commission of the Government of Guatemala and the General Command of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) issued on 6 August 1996 in Mexico City (see annex). Based on progress in the peace process achieved since the beginning of this year, the parties have undertaken, inter alia, to conclude their negotiations within this year.

In addition to progress at the negotiating table, as illustrated by the signing of the Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation on 6 May 1996, it is important to recall that the unilateral cessation of offensive military action declared by URNG on 19 March 1996, followed by a similar unilateral declaration by the Government on 20 March, have been scrupulously observed and that no casualty, military or civilian, has been registered since that date.

In their Framework Agreement of 10 January 1994, the parties requested that the United Nations verify all agreements reached between them. They have since reiterated this request in the five agreements signed to date. Under the authority of the General Assembly, the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and human rights aspects of the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples are already being verified by the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA). After the signing of a final peace agreement and the entry into force of all agreements reached between the parties, the United Nations will be called upon to verify implementation of these agreements and to assist the parties in complying with them. As I mentioned in my letter to you of 24 May 1996 (A/50/956), the

comprehensive nature of the agreements will make this a challenging task. In the coming months, I will carry out consultations with Member States with a view to identifying the best way to meet these challenges and I will submit my recommendations accordingly.

I should be grateful if you would convey the contents of this letter to the members of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

ANNEX

[Original: Spanish]

Joint statement by the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca

In the framework of a further round of negotiations, the Peace Commission of the Government of Guatemala and the General Command of URNG, with the participation of the United Nations Moderator, agree to issue the following joint statement:

1. In reviewing the progress made in the peace negotiations during the term of the current Government, the Parties express their satisfaction at what has been achieved, particularly the signing of the Agreement on Social and Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation. They also emphasize the significance of the unilateral decision by URNG to suspend attacks on military targets and abolish the levying of the war tax, and the Guatemalan Government's suspension of counterinsurgency activities.

2. All of this has been gradually laying the groundwork for a climate of political détente unprecedented in the history of the internal armed conflict, thereby helping to create a favourable climate for the peace talks and for political pluralism.

3. In keeping with the above, the Parties renew their pledge to act in a manner conducive to the climate of public peace which must characterize the final phase of the negotiating process, and they urge the population and the various sectors representing it to participate and to act in a manner consistent with the new situation that has emerged, so that the peace process, which is an irreversible fact, can proceed without hindrance and culminate in the lasting peace that is the common cause of all the peoples that go to make up the Guatemalan nation.

4. Having considered the items outstanding on the negotiating agenda, the Government of Guatemala and the General Command of URNG reiterate their firm determination to deal with those items with the thoroughness and care required by the signing of an agreement on a firm and lasting peace, and they undertake to complete this process by the end of 1996.

5. The Parties appeal to the people of Guatemala to join in recognizing that peace is inevitable, so that progress can be made towards securing a broad consensus on this issue and on what it means in terms of coexistence, progress and a basis for solving the political, economic, social and cultural problems with which Guatemala has had to contend. They also call on the international community to continue to strengthen the monitoring of the peace process.

6. The advent of peace marks the beginning of a new and auspicious chapter in Guatemala's history. It offers an unprecedented opportunity to redirect the country along the course of democratic coexistence based on social justice and framed in law. All of this will also have to translate into harmonious

relations with the community of nations. We Guatemalans must therefore rise to the occasion and spare no effort to turn this opportunity into a path of progress for our country.

Mexico City, 6 August 1996

For the Peace Commission of
the Government of Guatemala

[Signed]

Gustavo PORRAS CASTEJÓN

For the General Command of the
Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional
Guatemalteca

[Signed]

Commander Rolando MORÁN

For the United Nations

[Signed]

Jean ARNAULT
Moderator